FEBRUARY 2002

TRANSREPORT

TRANSPORTATION NEWS FROM THE BOSTON METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

MPO Seeks Comments on Transportation Plan Update and Public Involvement Program

This month the Boston MPO will hold workshops around the region, cosponsored by a variety of local and transportation-related organizations, at which the public can learn about and comment on two documents currently undergoing public review: the draft Regional Transportation Plan Update and the draft Public Involvement Program. This round of workshops will build upon a dialogue initiated with the public during workshops held last fall on the Transportation Plan Update. At this month's sessions MPO staff will again lead small-group discussions.

The draft Update includes revisions to policies guiding transportation planning in the region and sets forth a 25-year program of 45 highway projects totalling $1.5 billion and 11 transit projects totalling $1.87 billion. The document also contains an enhanced discussion of environmental justice issues that reflects the ongoing work of the Boston MPO Environmental Justice Ad Hoc Committee.

Participants at the meetings will hear how staff used the information gleaned from the fall workshops to develop the draft Update, and they will have an opportunity to ask questions as well as comment on the document.

Staff will also present the draft Public Involvement Program. This document expands on its predecessor, which described only the public review process for MPO documents. The new program describes all the public involvement efforts in which the MPO typically engages, including public meetings, workshops, and seminars, working with ad hoc committees and other advisory groups, and disseminating information through the MPO Web site, Internet subscriptions, and *TRANSREPORT*.

The public is encouraged to review the two draft documents prior to attending this month's meetings. Both may be found on the MPO Web site at www.ctps.org by clicking on the "What's New" button. While downloading the documents from the Web site is the fastest way to obtain them, they are also available on CD-ROM, in print, and on tape. To request a copy of the documents in the format of your choice, contact the Central Transportation Planning Staff at (617) 973-7100 or publicinformation@ctps.org.

Written comments must be received by the specified closing date to be included in the final documents. The comment period on the draft Plan closes on February 28, and the comment period on the proposed Public Involvement Program closes on March 11. Written comments may be sent to CTPS, 10 Park Plaza, Boston, MA 02116, Attn.: Anne McGahan, or to publicinformation@ctps.org.

PUBLIC WORKSHOPS

Workshops on the Transportation Plan Update and the MPO's Public Involvement Program

All workshop cosponsored by the Regional Transportation Advisory Committee and the American Council of Engineering Consultants

See page 4 for meeting locations

Weymouth Tuesday, February 5, 7:00 P.M. to 9:00 P.M. – Additional sponsors: Representative Joseph Sullivan, Chairman of the Joint Committee on Transportation; Town of Weymouth; South Shore Coalition; and South Shore Chamber of Commerce.

Lynn Wednesday, February 6, 6:00 P.M to 8:00 P.M. – Additional sponsors: Greater Lynn Senior Services, Lynn Area Chamber of Commerce, and Salem Harbor Development Corporation.

Bedford Thursday, February 7, 7:30 P.M. to 9:30 P.M. – Additional sponsors: Minuteman Advisory Group for Interlocal Coordination and Town of Bedford.

Boston Monday, February 11, noon to 3:00 P.M. at the State Transportation Building, and 6:00 P.M. to 8:00 P.M at the Boston Public Library. Additional sponsor: City of Boston.

Natick Wednesday, February 13, 5:30 P.M. to 7:30 P.M. – Additional sponsor: MetroWest Growth Management Committee.

Somerville Wednesday, February 13, 7:00 P.M. to 9:00 P.M. – Additional sponsor: City of Somerville.

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The members of the Boston Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO): Executive Office of Transportation and Construction • City of Boston • City of Everett • City of Newton • City of Peabody • Federal Highway Administration • Federal Transit Administration • Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority • Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority Advisory Board • Massachusetts Highway Department • Massachusetts Port Authority • Massachusetts Turnpike Authority • Metropolitan Area Planning Council • Regional Transportation Advisory Council • Town of Bedford • Town of Framingham • Town of Hopkinton

Boston Metropolitan Planning Organization Activities

Transportation Planning & Programming Committee Action Items

Throughout January the Transportation Planning and Programming Committee continued development of the Transportation Plan Update and the MPO's Public Involvement Program. On January 24 it voted to approve distribution of both documents to the public for review periods of 30 days and 45 days, respectively (see related article on page 1).

The committee also voted on January 10 to approve the release of the MBTA Bus Route 66 Arterial Improvement Study and on January 24 to circulate for review a proposed adjustment to the fiscal year 2002–07 Transportation Improvement Program. The study, conducted by the Central Transportation Planning Staff for MassHighway and the MBTA, documents the performance of bus route 66, one of the MBTA's most heavily utilized routes, and traffic conditions on the roads it uses, which are key arterials for the region. It recommends strategies for alleviating traffic congestion and better serving route 66's 11,000 daily passengers. For a copy of the report, contact Lourenço Dantas at (617) 973-7100 or ldantas@ctps.org. It may also be downloaded from the MPO Web site at www.ctps.org: click on the "What's New" button.

The proposed adjustment to the TIP amends the first three years of the current document's transit element. It reflects the actual federal funding apportionments for FY 2002 and current project schedules. It also programs, for capital projects, funds that were freed up by shifting preventive maintenance costs to the MBTA's operating budget. The adjustment may also be found under "What's New" on the MPO Web site or requested by contacting David Mohler at (617) 973-7100 or mohler@ctps.org.

Regional Transportation Advisory Council Update

Under the MPO's recently negotiated Memorandum of Understanding the "JRTC" is history, but in its place is a new name for the MPO's main public advisory group: the Regional Transportation Advisory Council. Marcy Crowley, chair of the Advisory Council, believes the new name will better communicate the group's function. "Unlike our old one, this gives people a clear idea of who we are and what we do," she explained. "We are moving forward with a number of new initiatives, and this first step sets the stage." The Advisory Council chair also heads the MPO's Public Involvement Committee, a recently created standing committee of the Transportation Planning and Programming Committee, which developed the draft MPO Public Involvement Program, now available for public review (see above).

At the January Advisory Council meeting, Luisa Paiewonsky, director of MassHighway's Bureau of Transportation Planning and Development, former executive secretary of the MPO, and leader during the MOU negotiations, gave a detailed briefing on the MOU. At its February meeting, the Advisory Council will focus on the draft Transportation Plan Update and the draft Public Involvement Program. All are welcome to attend, listen, and share their views on these important documents.

AACT Update

The Access Advisory Committee to the MBTA has been developing a new brochure and revising its bylaws. The brochure, which describes AACT's mission and accomplishments, is now available: contact Janie Guion at (617) 973 7100, guion@ctps.org, or (617) 973-7089 (TDD). Revision of the bylaws will be completed by the spring.

Nominations for an election of officers to be held in April were opened at the January AACT meeting. Philip Beaulieu accepted a nomination to continue as chair. Further nominations will be accepted at the February meeting, which will also feature a presentation on accessibility features of the Anderson Regional Transportation Center in Woburn.

Appropriations for Transportation Approved

On December 18 Congress released the Conference Report of the 2002 Transportation Appropriations bill. Included in the bill are fiscal year 2002 Federal Transit Administration apportionments and allocations. The largest apportionment for the Boston region is $90.1 million in section 5307 formula funds. Except for one percent that is set aside for the Transit Enhancement Program, these funds may be used at the discretion of the Boston MPO.

The remainder of the FTA money coming to the region is in section 5309 funding categories. The MBTA will receive $66.7 million in section 5309 Rail Modernization funds, some of which will be spent on MBTA facilities in the Central Massachusetts and Merrimack Valley MPOs. For the South Boston Piers Transitway, $10.5 million is earmarked through the New Starts program, and an additional $4 million is carried over from FY 2001. Section 5309 Bus funds for the region include $0.99 million in new funds earmarked for projects in MetroWest, at Salem Station and at Beverly Station. In addition to funds for those projects and the Piers Transitway, another $5.3 million is earmarked for transit projects in the region through the New Starts and Bus programs.

The appropriations bill also includes funds for highway projects in the region. It earmarks $1.75 million in funding for the construction of a new Chelsea Street Bridge between Boston and Chelsea over the Chelsea River. The current bridge's channel is too narrow to allow the larger tankers to pass through. The Longfellow Bridge between Cambridge and Boston over the Charles River is also the recipient of a congressional earmark, as $1.5 million has been set aside for the restoration of this vital link for cars, pedestrians, and the MBTA's Red Line.

Commuter Rail Information Improvements and Other T News

MBTA commuter rail passengers now have two new ways of obtaining schedule information for all trains: by checking new scrolling message signs on station platforms and by downloading schedules, etc., onto their personal palm powered devices. These options have been provided by the MBTA in its commitment to give passengers the information they need for their trips to be smoother and a more attractive alternative to motor vehicle travel.

Installation of new LED (light emitting diode) signs at 64 stations that were not already equipped with them was completed in 2001 under a $1.1 million contract. All stations built after 1995 have this technology as part of their design. Of the 123 commuter rail stations in the system, all but a handful have the signs up and running. The signs provide passengers waiting on station platforms with up-to-the-minute information on train status as well as any other MBTA service announcements.

The MBTA Web site provides a tour of its software for palm powered devices as well as downloading instructions and system requirements. Users of this feature can download the departure and arrival times of more than 450 daily trips, enabling them to electronically organize train schedule and route information and assisting them in planning trips around their personal schedules and appointments.

Headhouse Restoration at Park Street Boylston

Historic preservation work on the exteriors of the Boylston and Park Street station headhouses has been completed on the MBTA's Green Line. The restorations, which included the replacement of the roofs of the four structures, began in November 2000. Work was completed on the pair of Boylston headhouses in September 2001 and on the Park Street pair last month.

As the structures are on the National Register of Historic Places, the work followed strict guidelines. Not only are the headhouses on the National Register, but, being on Boston Common, they are located within a site that is itself on the Register. The Green Line was America's first subway; it opened to the public on September 1, 1897. The Boylston and Park Street headhouses are part of the original 1896 design.

Bus Route 97 Service Extension

On January 3 the MBTA extended bus route 97 to service the Gateway Center shopping plaza in Everett. Bus route 97 provides service between Malden Station and Wellington Station via residential areas in Everett and now continues beyond Wellington to three stops within Gateway Center, seven days a week. This new Service was implemented in response to public feedback requesting such an extension.

For the latest news and to download schedules and route information visit the MBTA's Web site at www.mbta.com.

Restored headhouse at Park Street Station

Logan Airport Terminal B Garage Reopens

The Massachusetts Port Authority reopened the Terminal B parking garage at Logan Airport on January 15. The garage had been closed since September 12, when the Federal Aviation Administration issued a security directive prohibiting parking within 300 feet of an airline terminal. Massport recently requested and received a waiver for the garage, after committing to increased security measures.

The Terminal B garage is the most convenient parking facility at Logan Airport. Its location, in the middle of the U-shaped Terminal B, enables travelers to make a quick connection from car to ticket counter. Terminal B is the busiest terminal at Logan, handling approximately 500 flights per day. Later this year, elevated moving walkways will connect Central Parking to Terminal B, further enhancing parking options for travelers using the terminal.

Several new security measures are in place at the Terminal B garage. Travelers are now asked to open their trunks, and the vehicles are searched by parking facility staff. Vehicles must now be parked front-end-in at all parking spaces. Those in violation are ticketed and towed. Parked vehicles are also subject to random checks by State Police. Massport is currently exploring the feasibility of using explosive-detection equipment in the checks made at the garage. In addition, State Police have been conducting random searches of vehicles at roadblocks three days a week throughout Logan Airport. Each day a roadblock is in effect, an average of 500 vehicles are searched.

For more information on parking at Logan visit www.massport.com or call 1-800-23-LOGAN.

Meeting Calendar

The public is welcome to attend the following transportation-related meetings this month. A photo ID is usually required for access to meeting locations.

At the State Transportation Building, 10 Park Plaza, Boston

Transit acccess: Take Green Line to Boylston Station, or Orange Line to Chinatown Station

Monday, February 11

Transportation Plan Update and Public Involvement Program — 12:00 P.M.
Transportation Library, 2nd Floor

Wednesday, February 13

Regional Transportation Advisory Council — 3:00 P.M.
Conference Room 1

Thursday, February 14

Boston MPO Transportation Planning and Programming Committee — 10:00 A.M.
MPO Conference Room, Suite 2150

MBTA Board of Directors — 1:00 P.M.
Conference Room 2/3

Thursday, February 21

Access Advisory Committee to the MBTA (AACT) — 1:00 P.M.
Conference Room 1

At Other Boston-Area Locations

Monday, February 4

Route 2, Acton/Concord, Feasibility Study — 7:30 P.M.
Acton Town Hall
Selectmen's Room
472 Main Street, Acton

Tuesday, February 5

Transportation Plan Update and Public Involvement Program — 7:00 P.M.
Weymouth Town Hall
75 Middle Street, Weymouth
(Transit access: Take #222 bus from Quincy Center Red Line station)

Wednesday, February 6

Transportation Plan Update and Public Involvement Program — 6:00 P.M.
Greater Lynn Senior Center
8 Silsbee Street, Lynn
(Transit access: Take Newburyport/Rockport commuter rail line to Lynn Station or take #442, #449, or #455 bus from Haymarket Station in Boston)

Thursday, February 7

Transportation Plan Update and Public Involvement Program — 7:30 P.M.
Bedford Town Hall
10 Mudge Way, Bedford

Friday, February 8

Breaking Gridlock: Toward Transportation That Works: Talk and Book-Signing — 7:30 P.M.
Appalachian Mountain Club
Cabot Auditorium
4 Joy Street, Boston
(Contact: Jane Roy Brown at jroybrown@amcinfo.org or at 617-523-0655 x332)

Monday, February 11

Transportation Plan Update and Public Involvement Program — 6:00 P.M.
Boston Public Library
Main Branch
700 Boylston Street, Boston
(Transit access: Take the Green Line to Copley Station, or take either the Orange Line or the South Side commuter rail lines to Back Bay Station)

Wednesday, February 13

Transportation Plan Update and Public Involvement Program — 5:30 P.M.
Natick Town Hall
13 East Central Street, Natick
(Transit access: Take Framingham/Worcester commuter rail line to Natick Station)

Transportation Plan Update and Public Involvement Program — 7:00 P.M.
Tufts University Cafeteria
TAB Building, 2nd Floor
167 Holland Street, Somerville
(Transit access: Walk five blocks from Red Line's Davis Station or take #87 or #88 bus from Davis Station)

Meeting dates and times are subject to change: please call (617) 973-7119 for confirmation. Additional transportation meetings open to the public are listed on the Boston MPO Web site, at www.ctps.org/ bostonmpo/involved/meetings.

Logan 2000 EDR Comment Period Extended

The Massachusetts Port Authority has extended the public comment period for the Logan Airport 2000 Environmental Data Report to February 8. This document provides a status report on:

- Passenger levels, aircraft operations, and cargo volumes.
- Planning, design, and construction activities.
- Conditions for key environmental indicators (ground transportation, noise abatement, air and water quality management) at Logan Airport for 2000.

Contact Jacki Wilkins at (617) 568-3558 or jwilkins@massport.com to request a copy of the report

TRANSreport

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TRANSreport is available in accessible formats to people with disabilities. Contact the Central Transportation Planning Staff Certification Activities Group at (617) 973-7119 (voice), (617) 973-7089 (TTY), (617) 973-8855 (fax) or publicinformation@ctps.org (e-mail).

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